

May 8, 2010

Dear FCC Commissioners:

For forty years I have worked with and interpreted for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and hard of hearing people who use American Sign Language and who need Interpreters in every aspect of their lives to communicate with English speaking people. My work as an Federal Communication Commission/Video Relay Service Interpreter for the past 5 years has lead me to conclude that FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System has/is dramatically changing the lives of people throughout America, helping to provide employment and social services by providing Communication Accessibility and independence unequalled by anything yet established public or private, in the world.

There is both a National and State perspective to what I am sharing with you tonight. I am the former Executive Director of the National Registry of Interpreters-RID (1982-1985), the largest National Association of Interpreters in the world. I am also the former State Executive Director of the Louisiana Commission for the Deaf-LCD (2004-2006), a State the leads the nation with one of the most effective community-based interpretation systems in America.

This National Association of Interpreters (RID) is working to build the number of Nationally Certified and State Licensed Interpreters to 30,000 (currently we have only 7,200). This number of 30,000 Nationally Certified and State Licensed Interpreters is the number of Interpreters needed to effectively provide "COMMUNICATION ACCESSIBILITY" to all Deaf, Deaf-Blind and hard of hearing people under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and under State laws already on the books. In conjunction, these laws require federal, state, local governments as well as private entities to provide ?COMMUNICATION ACCESSIBILITY? such that a person who is Deaf, Deaf-blind and hard of hearing can pursue employment, education and all social services equal to all Americans. The FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System makes this, in part, possible, while giving unequalled communication liberty to over 50 million U.S. Citizens who potentially use this system as it is developing. Impeding its development by reducing reimbursement rates would be catastrophic.

As Executive Director of a State Commission, charged by law with providing "direct communication accessibility", I witnessed and reported a state-wide development of communication accessibility created by and supported with the FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System, potentially extending "communication accessibility" to all Deaf, Deaf-Blind and hard of hearing residents of Louisiana.

The FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System is, singularly, the most important telecommunication advancement for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and hard of hearing people yet invented and is waiting for its completion (i.e., it is not 100% complete or accessible to all U.S citizens). With this FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System, millions of consumers are employed; are communicating with

parents, children, relatives, friends, political leaders, employers, employees, and are NOT cut off, left out or left behind from full participation in society. Thus effectively, both Federal ADA and State mandates are being met.

One VRS company, among several other leading VRS companies, has answered the call to attempt to build the first and finest FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System in the world - Sorenson. This new FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System provided by all VRS companies, leads the world in communication accessibility. The United States is without a peer in regards to communication accessibility for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and hard of hearing people.

Do not take Americans and America backwards by under-funding and thereby constricting the development of this nascent FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System. With appropriate, consistent Federal Funding, with committed corporate program development, and dedicated, specific cost structures required to develop a National Video Phone System for all, the FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System can develop and document again America's commitment to all Americans for full unrestricted participation.

Most if not all VRS companies attempt to attract and train Interpreters for the demanding work of a VRS Interpreter. This is a long-term effort (i.e., one to eight years) where thousands of potential interpreters can enter and succeed at working with Deaf, Deaf-Blind and hard of hearing people all across America. Higher education institutions are responding to the FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System demands by making investments in their colleges and universities. Some universities have announced an increase in their research departments and graduate programs in an effort to meet the demand for interpreters created by the FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System. The initial effort by the FCC has created a demand and market for Certified and State Licensed Interpreters across America who, when ready, can work with FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System companies.

Specifically, I am requesting that each of you do the following:

1st ? Vote to KEEP the PER MINUTE FEE at \$6.66/minute for all VRS Companies.

2nd ? Vote to stipulate and therefore document, annually, how ALL VRS Companies invest to improve and stabilize the entire national FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System: both in regards to Interpreter personnel and technical aspects of said FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System.

3rd - Establish and pay for an over-sight staff team charged with managing audit programs that insure that the FCC/VRS/Interpreter companies are performing at optimum levels of service and that audits are transparent and consumer driven.

This plea is urgent. We do not have much time before this FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System explodes onto a new plateau of service. Video Cell Phones (VCPs) are months away. Improved and expanded broadband services are months away. More people will be using the FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System and more calls per year will exceed all predictions. Some experts predict between 2 - 4 times the number of VRS calls will hit the U.S. FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System. This will stretch if not topple the Phone System and the personnel in place in the educational pipe line will not be sustainable. The FCC may even be ?under-funding? the Phone System at \$6.66 per minute to meet this dramatic demand and insure all citizens have equal access to communication. An under-funded/crippled FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System, without continued investment and development would constrict or destroy the communicative progress, started by the FCC and made by millions of Americans.

It is clearly not an easy task for the FCC, VRS Companies and Interpreters, but it never is easy when great things need to be done ? and this FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System is a great thing ? and truly another American invention that frees its people to live prosperous lives and will be modeled, eventually by people around the globe.

This FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System is NOT complete. Only some, not all Deaf, Deaf-Blind and hard of hearing people have access to this historic system. Interpreters and the technologically in the Phone System needs progressive developments so that the Phone System can effectively and timely handle all future calls. This Federal/Private Partnership stands to extend Americas lead in providing true Communication Accessibility. Please remember - English speaking Americans want to communicate with and work with Deaf, Deaf-Blind and hard of hearing Americans. This is a shared concern of us all. America leads again and the world is watching.

Thank you for your time in reading my comments and for permitting me to personally work for the FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System.

Please keep this FCC/VRS/Interpreter Phone System viable and moving forward for ALL Deaf, Deaf-Blind and hard of hearing Americans.

Respectfully Submitted by,

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